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MC EDWARDS



# Virginia Wildlife

**Dedicated to the Conservation of  
Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources  
and to the Betterment of  
Outdoor Recreation in Virginia**

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#### PUBLICATION OFFICE: Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 W. Broad St., Richmond, Virginia

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## FEBRUARY

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## EDITORIAL

### To Each His Own

BILL COCHRAN'S article, "The Hunter: A Man Who Can Be Proud," in the November, 1971, *Virginia Wildlife*, has elicited the expected reader comment. Some people liked it. One correspondent did not. We respect her right, and the right of those who feel as she does, to their own opinions. We hope they can be equally charitable toward those of us who disagree with them.

The lady's lengthy and thoughtfully prepared letter takes issue with the Cochran article on several points, and accuses the author of bringing his arguments in defense of hunting into "metaphysical, illogical areas" that are "outside the realm of reason." But the real crux of the dissent from the proposition that a hunter is a man who can be proud seems to be summed up in one statement: "The main point I cannot comprehend about hunting is how a person who is well fed and clothed can justify killing an animal."

Implicit in the quoted statement is the assumption that it is somehow "wrong" to kill any animal, unless the killing can be "justified" on the basis of something akin to necessity in order to survive. We submit, however, that there is nothing in the realm of reason or logic that says that it is inherently wrong to kill a wild animal *so long as the species is not endangered thereby*. And is it not a bit puritanical to hold that an act becomes wicked if the person who commits it does so mainly because he enjoys it?

We concede that to some people hunting is repugnant. Very well. They do not have to participate. Some people wonder why on earth grown men want to pound and pummel each other for a couple of hours just to advance a football down a gridiron, too. But their lack of desire to take part does not make participation wrong for those who do so desire.

There are all sorts of perfectly legitimate ways to experience and enjoy the whole spectrum of natural outdoor resources, including wildlife. Hunting is one way. We question anyone's right to challenge the propriety or quality of another's experience so long as the resources themselves, and their enjoyment by others, are not put in jeopardy.

We discern no anti-hunting sentiment among those best qualified to evaluate the quality of the entire hunting experience—namely, the hunters themselves. As for the resources, legal hunting as it is practiced today jeopardizes no wildlife species. Quite to the contrary, legal hunting has made possible the research, management and law enforcement which have resulted in increased populations of a number of game species, in the face of many forms of wildlife habitat destruction and degradation, and has provided special protection for those species that do need it.

The proposition that the hunter is a man who can be proud should not offend anyone. Certainly it is not intended to convey as a corollary that the non-hunter has anything to be ashamed of! Conservation efforts would be all the more effective if those who are genuinely concerned with the resources involved would recognize their fundamental community of interests and not waste their energy fighting each other.—J. F. Mc.

## LETTERS

### Something Wrong

WHILE looking at your *Virginia Wildlife* cover for month of November, 1971, it seems that there is something wrong with the landing gear of the ducks shown. It seems to me that the two ducks close to the water should have their feet in a landing position. The one at the highest position appears all right. I have watched ducks come down and land on the water but I have never seen them with feet in this position.

J. A. Hardy, Jr.  
Blackstone

### Qu-rouse!

I am really impressed with the new breed of game bird on the front cover of the December issue of *Virginia Wildlife*. Imagine the consummate skill of the breeder who has produced ruffed grouse with identical coloration to the bobwhite quail!

I hope in a future issue you will run an article relating the biological process by which grouse were bred to have the exact coloration of the bobwhite and also what area of Virginia has been stocked with these interesting creatures.

This is probably the only lapse I have detected in your very, very excellent publication of which all Virginians should be proud.

M. Patton Echols, Jr.  
Arlington

### 50 Years

I would like to draw your attention to a situation which I believe to be unique.

My father, Walter H. Cheek, of 109 South Mill Court, Mount Hope, West Virginia, is 78 years old, and this year (1971) he makes his 50th application for a non-resident Virginia hunting license. He missed one year out of the last 51, so the 50 licenses are not quite consecutive. He hunted deer in Bath County in each of those years except one, when he hunted elk in Giles County.

During those years he has killed 19 deer and one turkey in Virginia.

He loves hunting in Virginia better than in any other area. I wonder if it would be wrong of me to suggest that my father be made an "Honorary Virginia Citizen" which would preclude his paying a license fee during the remainder of his lifetime. In any case, I thought this information might be of interest. My Dad, being the terrific guy he is, deserves whatever he can get.

Harry E. Cheek  
St. Petersburg, Florida

*Fifty non-resident hunting licenses probably is an unequalled record. We regret that it is not possible for your father to receive a complimentary or lifetime license, but Virginia law simply does not permit it.—Ed.*



**M**Y wife and I stopped the car and watched them. There were four, not 50 yards off the highway grazing lazily, their white rears glistening in the last glaze of afternoon sun. It was as if I was seeing my first whitetail deer, although I've hunted them most of my life—killed several, as a matter of fact.

Suddenly, the roar of another approaching vehicle caused them to bolt upright. Heads bent to the wind, they shot off into the darkening parkland like a frightened pack train, all in line with the big eight pointer who served as leader. I started the car and Carol said, "Their tails looked like white flags. How could you ever kill something so beautiful?"

My answer was simple and direct: Deer makes one of the most tender, juicy steaks I've ever sunk my teeth into. I've killed my share of them in my life and every one has tasted a little better than the other. There were about 50 million of these fine game animals in colonial days. They were a main diet for soldiers of the Revolution and trappers who opened the western sections of

movements.

Two weeks before the season opened in Virginia last year, I made a special trip to Fairystone Park in Patrick County to get a hunter's eye view of the whitetail condition in that immediate area. The portion of parkland that I visited had been opened to hunting for the first time in two years. They do that at Fairystone, opening and closing certain parts of the parkland each deer season to allow for replenishment and account for deer movements.

What I found was extraordinary. Bushes were naked of bark, large trees had been rubbed constantly, and the game trails were trampled like a stockyard. I knew I had found my place for the opening season two weeks away.

But when I returned to the same area on opening day, it was as if the deer had been watching the calendar just as closely. There were the signs—practically the same that I had seen on my inspection tour. I hunted for one week in that area after the season opened and

## The Whitetail Deer

By ED MYERS  
*Martinsville*

the country.

I'm sure they felt the same way about deer steak as I do.

But I don't believe my wife was directing her question to me out of condemnation of my hunting prowess. Instead, she was completely caught up in the graceful beauty of the whitetail. And on that I must agree. The whitetail deer has to be one of the most remarkable creatures alive. Delicate in appearance, with matchstick legs and timid eyes, he can survive the harsh, deep snows that send most creatures far underground. In an extraordinarily open way, he survives regardless of the crowding advances of modern times. In a respectable way, he has come to be respected.

How can he thrive in a crowding world that has already claimed over 50 species of wildlife and caused alarm for 89 others? Easy. Underneath that exterior of timidity lurks a natural and quick intelligence. In the sleek greyhound body and long, limber legs lies the speed and physical assets of a bird in flight. The American Indians saw this and honored it with paintings inside their living quarters. The modern day hunter still finds it by matching his wits against the deer's careful



Remsen Studio, Martinsville

Spring often brings whitetail, or "Virginia," deer out into the open, where they can be spotted taking advantage of the greening vegetation.

didn't see my first whitetail. The fact that they had disappeared was clearly a case of intelligence.

A friend of mine had an even more extraordinary experience in his home county of Pittsylvania a few years ago. He was hunting whitetail with dogs and had managed to strike a big buck out of his bedding in a thick cut-over portion of a forest in the eastern portion of the county. The dogs carried the deer well for over an hour, and were clearly bringing him back for what would have been an easy kill.

However, right at the moment the hunter readied his gun for a kill, the dogs stopped. When he found them they were rustling around in a confused circle along a creek bank. The deer had disappeared—supposedly. Yet, as he inspected the opposite bank his eyes fell to a stream of bubbles in the water as it ran under a cut-out part of the bank. Sure enough, there was the buck, completely submerged in water except for his rack, ears and nostrils.

The whitetail is the most numerous and widely populated type of deer in America. Called by other names such as the "eastern" or "Virginia" deer, he can just

as likely be seen in some farmer's cornfield along a busy interstate highway as in a deep, wilderness-ridden forest. He commonly weighs around 200 pounds when full grown, but since he comes in 30 various subspecies his weight is a guessed-at thing. Whitetails weighing as much as 300 pounds have been recorded, although this is unusual.

In the three warmer seasons, the whitetail adapts to wide ranges of feeding, eating everything from leaves to acorns. A favorite food in spring, summer and fall is the rich green grass of sun-soaked fields. In the southeastern part of the state—the upper Piedmont Belt—I have counted as many as 10 to a herd in the warm summer days. Corn is another fall favorite of the whitetail.

Come winter, however, the movements of whitetails become more restricted due to the natural elements. The main food line becomes the bark and branches of trees and shrubs. In deep snow (two feet or over) the animals go into a “yarding” formation, which is simply a single-word expression saying they stick together in small groups like sheep. They yard on the south sides of mountains, along thickly wooded lakeshores and streams to break the harsh winter winds. Constantly moving about in these small groups, they keep their escape trails open and food available. But heavy snows limit their feeding range to about one-fifth the normal mile size.

Nature lets the whitetail shed his coat twice a year, so he will always blend well with the particular season colors. This is for protection, of course, and the deep-red color of late spring and summer contrasts sharply with the brown-gray of fall and winter. The thickness of this seasonal coat naturally follows the seasons just like the colors. The fur becomes so heavy in winter, as a matter of fact, the whitetail can sleep in a patch of heavy snow without melting it. The reason for this is that the body is suspended somewhat by the thick fur, never allowing body temperature to reach the cold snow.

Of all the animals inhabiting the woodland, the whitetail is one of those with a fantastic sense of smell. I've heard hunters comment about near misses because the deer smelled a cigarette they had just discarded. Some of the scent devices, such as the tarsal gland located inside the hind legs near the hocks, releases a stout-scented fluid to warn of danger. Also, there is another separate gland system at the toes of every foot which aid the whitetail in going back over country he just covered.

The running ability of the whitetail is almost unequaled by anything else in the American woodland. Reaching top speeds of 40 miles per hour, the animal can spring over high fences and most anything of equal height. He can tear across five miles of rough country at a constant speed of 30 miles per hour. With this great speed and agility, not even water stops them. On the contrary, they seem right at home in water and their dry-coated fur gives them buoyancy for long distances. I once saw a big doe swim for over a mile down the main

channel of Philpott Lake in Patrick County. She would probably have kept right on going, but she ran up against the huge concrete dam and had to turn to shore. When some nearby boaters docked along the shore above her, expecting to find a worn-out deer, she darted into the woods as if shot from a cannon. I don't know why the doe was in the water. Perhaps to escape the summer heat; perhaps just to cross to the other side. Maybe she was only taking a swim to get rid of the flies.

The mating season for whitetails begins in early November. The young are usually born in May. The doe makes her fawning bed in brush-laddened areas along the edges of heavy forests or deep along the shorelines of wilderness lakes. The normal offspring born number from one to three, with an average weight below 10 pounds. The fawn is born with a coat of red and natural spotted fur that fits its wooded birthplace like the bark of a tree. It does very little walking around, flopping to the ground at the slightest strange sound. Fawns also have little smell about them, and this, added to an inert instinct and perfect camouflage, gives it overall protection.

Newborns are hidden by the mother doe who, in turn, keeps constant guard far enough away so that her scent will not betray her young. A diligent mother, she feeds her young at fixed intervals, giving a milk rich in solids, fats and proteins. As a direct result of this fatty milk diet, fawns almost double in weight in half-a-month after birth. In less than a month, the fawn can chew and digest solid, natural foods like leaves and acorns. They are weaned from their mother completely in four months.

Unlike most newborn wildlife, fawns do not leave their mother after being weaned. If they were like other wild newborn, they would now be off on their life-cycle of an average 10 years. But they're still something special in the mother's book.

Above all else, the whitetail is an unequaled animal when it comes to silence in the forest. Watching a big buck or doe from a distance, the hunter or observer can get the strange feeling that the animal's feet are off the ground. Indeed, this ability to take a silent stroll across the dry-leaf carpet of a fall forest is, to say the least, a masterful thing. But the whitetail knows the secret. He doesn't “trample” over the leaves; instead, he slips his hooves under them. In this hedging process, he succeeds in never cracking a loud sound—and baffling his enemies becomes a common virtue.

In the final analysis, it should stand to reason that the whitetail deer will be with us for a long time. But it should also be remembered that around the turn of this century, when wholesale slaughter of wildlife and destruction of its habitat went largely unnoticed, the whitetail was almost destroyed. Saved by adequate protection and better management of its range, the whitetail has now emerged as one of the best adjusters to a rapidly changing civilization. Perhaps, even as we make mention of it, this remarkable animal's camouflaged intelligence still goes underestimated.



# SECOND PHEASANT HARVEST

By DENNIS HART

*Supervisor, Foreign Game Program*

THE legal kill of pheasants in Virginia's second pheasant hunting season was strikingly like that of the season of 1970, a year earlier—224 pheasants reported in November, 1971, through checking stations, compared with 216 for 1970.

Loudoun County's reported harvest of 41 pheasants again appears to be a take of pheasant populations resulting from releases by both the Game Commission and sportsmen and landowners in the area.

Three other counties near the top in numbers killed were Page (63-87), Shenandoah (20-21), and Charles City (13-9). Figures cited following each county name are numbers reported killed in November '70 and November '71, respectively. Further stocking in these counties was deferred in order to facilitate determining indications as to pheasant ability to recoup hunting season harvest and other losses.

General indications in these counties is for natural seasonal propagation to slightly more than counter-balance fall and winter season losses.

The 1971 season was unseasonably warm and this probably hindered pheasant hunting, and especially good dog work, to some extent.

Of the total reported kill only four were banded. These were harvested in Rockingham County where recent stockings have taken place. It is again apparent that harvested pheasants were largely the *progeny* of initial stockings. This is a clear indication of successful brood rearing—a prime prerequisite of successful wild pheasant establishment.

Hunter comments relative to their experiences in the recent pheasant season bear out the previous season's indications that "pheasant hunting in Virginia offers a normal challenge to hunter expertise and sportsmanship." Overall indications are that we need to learn

and adapt to certain peculiarities of pheasant hunting, i.e.: pheasants should be hunted at a faster pace in order to induce flight in place of running; close working spaniels or specially trained pointing dogs give best results with pheasants. Many good quail dogs learn quite quickly to handle pheasants differently in order to foil them in ground escape.

Again in the 1971 season, interviewed hunters in general expressed themselves as liking the open season, wanting more pheasants, and wanting a longer season. The general impression gained by Game Commission biologists and game wardens was that, with pheasant season coming on the first two days of the general hunting season, major hunter interest in most areas was centered on the conventional species, particularly deer. A question to be considered, therefore, for the next hunting season, is whether it would be advisable to lengthen the season to four or five days or the full hunting week.

A pheasant evaluation party, in the Page County Area, including a Game Commission biologist and two officials of the Wildlife Management Institute, bagged 3 pheasants and reported pheasant behavior comparable to that of birds found in northern pheasant states excepting that Virginia's more pristine strains were wilder and faster.

Also, a hunter in Charles City County, who had also hunted there in 1970, reported essentially the same density of population and bird behavior.

Two hunters, pursuing small game in one Valley of Virginia community a week before pheasant season, phoned the Game Commission office to report having flushed 8 pheasants.

Where do we go from here with pheasants? And how can we, the rank and file of hunters and wildlife lovers, help?

First, it would appear, we ought to encourage our hunting acquaintances to protect pheasants most carefully when the season on them is closed and to hunt them systematically during the season when pheasant shooting is allowed. Hunt cocks only. Save the hens; this is crucial! Pheasants mate in a ratio of one cock bird to as many as ten or more hens. Report every pheasant killed; this will enable us to effectively evaluate the results of our stockings.

Become an enthusiastic pheasant hunter. Learn how really rewarding and enjoyable pheasant hunting, shooting and eating can be. Keep in mind the various reasons for introducing pheasants to Virginia. Basic is the fact that large areas of Virginia are so extensively and intensively farmed that our native quail and rabbits have been pushed into the more limited woods edges and idle corners. Pheasants have demonstrated in the northern states that they can inhabit the larger and more cultivated fields which our native species find to be no longer suitable.

You may want to sharpen your knowledge of pheasants by visiting one of Virginia's licensed shooting

Lonnie L. Williamson of Laurel, Maryland, displays the rooster pheasant retrieved for him by Bruno, his 18-month-old Brittany spaniel after Williamson downed the bird early on opening day in Page County.

Commission photo by Sattenlee



(Continued on page 23)

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

# BUBO, THE MAGNIFICENT

By AL SHIMMEL  
*West Decatur, Pennsylvania*

**H**E crossed the fifty yard, waist deep creek in record time. Even as he climbed the bank, dripping and gasping, I could see that he was visibly shaken.

Late in the afternoon we parked the car, well off the highway at the upper edge of the meadow flat. Above us on the shoulder of the hill, the headstones of an ancient cemetery pushed above the unkept grass. The creek curved away from the road to hug the base of the mountain. I made some cryptic remark concerning the company of friendly ghosts while we were surface fishing for the bass that abounded in this particular flat. He replied in kind.

Shortly after sunset we crossed the shallows at the head of the pool. My friend had chosen to work the upper water while I walked down to the tail of the pool. Here I found a comfortable seat where I could watch the flat for signs of feeding fish.

A silver maple shaded the lower pool. I noticed the flagstones near its base were soiled with white splashings. Investigating, I found owl castings, tag ends of fur, feathers and bits of broken bones.

By scrambling up the ledges that rose abruptly behind the maple, I was soon on a level with the lower branches. One had been broken close to the trunk allowing decay to eat a cavity into the trunk. There was evidence of a nest but in the fading light it was impossible to determine whether young were present. I could detect the faint odor of skunk, a favored delicacy of the horned owl. Having experienced the resentment of the adults when their home territory is invaded, I crossed the creek to fish from the meadow side.

My attention was taken with the concentration that comes when fish are hitting well. My ears were tuned to the splash of the lure at the end of the cast, the soft burblings as it is retrieved, and the explosion when a bass strikes.

Suddenly the darkness was disturbed by a harsh scream followed by a bit of hackle raising caterwauling. My neck hair stood at attention; then I recognized it as the cry of young owls when food is brought to the nest.

The courage of my friend (who shall remain nameless) is beyond question. As an enlisted infantryman he won a field commission under combat conditions. He arrived at my side of the creek in record breaking time. It took a bit of explaining to convince him that his apprehensions were without foundation.

We had four good bass when the action ceased to-



ward midnight. To keep them safe from prowling raccoons we fastened the stringer to a heavy rock and sank it in two feet of water, some distance from the shore. A round topped boulder extending a few inches above the surface was our landmark.

Mist curled in gray streamers above the water. Dawn was little more than a promise when I stepped into the water and waded out to retrieve our breakfast bass. The stringer lay across the freshly wet boulder with the heads of the bass still attached. Nothing edible remained. I was puzzled until I saw, plastered to the wet rock, a barred breast feather. The thief had been the owl, breakfasting at our expense.

Above the head of the pool the creek struck the rocky cliff forcing the flow to turn at right angles to its original course. A spring freshet had tumbled a stump against the base of the cliff leaving it stranded on a narrow shelf close to the water. Perched on one of the grotesque roots was a horned owl, perhaps the very one that had stolen our fish. Splashings on the driftwood and stones were evidence that this was a regularly used perch.



When I moved in its direction, it kept its head turned toward me. I was within twenty yards when it spread its wings and flew silent into the timber. Its wings spread close to five feet. Truly it was a magnificent sight.

Early in my youth I met Bubo. A shadowed lane led from the meadow pasture through a woodlot to the barn. This timber was an extension of a mixed track of pine and hardwoods that projected into the cultivated land of the farm. This was known as the "Owl Woods" and for good reason.

Where the pasture corner met the timber, an isolated colony of fox grapes sprawled over the stone fence and climbed the straight trunks to form a dark canopy far above. Wild creatures shared my taste for the tangy, wild fruit. I kept close watch as they approached maturity to forestall my competitors in fur and feathers. After harvesting the juicy clusters that grew within reach, I looked longingly at the pendants of fruit that grew high above.

Some of the finest grapes hung from a jungle of vines that spread in a wild tangle over the crown of a huge white oak. One of the lower limbs projected from the trunk, then turned at right angles in its struggle for a place in the sun. Here I discovered my first horned owl. It was sitting close to the trunk protected from above by a mat of vines. It blinked sleepily but sat unmoved.

I saw it more or less regularly until winter. Even then it perched here but generally flew at my approach.

When by accident I discovered the castings that littered the ground, I was fascinated. My father explained their origin, and together we examined their contents and identified some of the components.

One winter evening as we crossed the corner of the snowy meadow we started a cottontail that scooted toward the sanctuary of the stone fence. A silent shadow stooped from the woods. There were frantic scurryings, then a scream that sent chills racing up my spine. When I examined the spot the following morning, I found shreds of fur, a sprinkling of blood, and the double X that is the signature of the horned owl.

During the early part of the new year we became increasingly aware that a pair of these winged predators were preparing to set up housekeeping. Their hootings boomed through the timber. Often they visited the old orchard behind the house and awakened us with their booming calls. Occasionally late in the afternoon, particularly if the sky was overcast, we heard them call. I found that their vocalizing during the day usually preceded a storm.

I had somehow acquired the mistaken idea that these huge owls always nested in hollow trees. During the late winter and early spring I spent much of my spare time searching all the known hollows in the vicinity but failed to find the nest. Perhaps it is just as well. I later learned that nesting pairs are capable of punishing trespassers severely.

I saw the owls frequently during the summer. In

mid-June I saw a fledgling. Down was not entirely covered by its adult plumage. The head had not yet developed the "horns." It was decidedly gnomish in appearance. Often I caught a brief glimpse of the owls by following the sound of flocking crows. They never failed to riot when they discovered a day roost. At least once, to my knowledge, the tables were turned when one of the flock became too bold. The black mobster was captured, torn to pieces and devoured before the eyes of its companions.

I was in my middle teens when I had an experience that gave me a start and increased my respect for this powerful winged hunter.

Among the skills acquired by most country boys were the use and care of rifle and ax. Both my father and grandfather were experts. Under their watchful tutelage



Photo by Leonard Lee Rue III

A favorite delicacy of the horned owl, which is one of the few predators apparently not deterred by the skunk's chemical defenses.

I became reasonably proficient.

The chestnut blight had not as yet taken its toll. There was an abundance of acorns, chestnuts and shag bark hickory nuts as well as wild grapes and corn pilfered from the farm fields. It was my duty to keep the squirrel population within bounds. Custom demanded that the animal should be hunted with a rifle. Economics were involved. Hulls at 18 cents a box were not easy to acquire. We kept a strict accounting of scores.

Dawn was graying the east when I made my way down the prop road to a cove where several chestnut and hickory trees dominated the woods. There had been a sharp frost that opened the chestnut burs and dropped the leaves and nuts of the hickory. I squatted at the base



of a stump. Below, a spring overflow ran down the hollow. Already I could hear squirrels moving among the crowns. Soon shell fragments began to dribble down to the forest floor.

I could see the sights well enough to shoot when the first squirrel came down a tree and hung a few feet from the ground while he began on the nut he carried. At the crack of the rifle he dropped to the ground. I heard another scurry up to hide behind a low crotch.

Given a reasonable time to recover from his fright, I began to "talk" him out of hiding. By placing two fingers against the lips and making an exaggerated kissing sound, a crude imitation of a squirrel's barking is produced. By drawing out the sound a screeching similar to that produced by a modern vermin call is made. Squirrels seem to resent invasion of territorial rights by strangers.

My attention was riveted on the tree where the squirrel was hidden when out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of something huge and dark, swooping in my direction. I threw myself aside, twisted and fired an ineffectual shot as the owl passed silently, so close I could feel the air from its wings. I glimpsed the extended, needle sharp talons and heard the popping of its bill as it flared into the timber. Had I failed to see the bird, I am sure I would have worn scars to remind me of the experience. I was so shaken that I missed three easy shots in succession. Since that time I have often brought them in either by using a squealer type vermin call or imitating their hooting by voice alone.

The boat was floating close to the pad beds in a shallow arm of the lake. The fish had been cooperative and the sunset beautiful. We had been discussing owls and how they responded to calling. My friend pressed me for a demonstration. Not expecting a response I cupped my hands and sent the call booming over the quiet water. I was answered almost immediately from a ridge that separates the two arms of the lake. A second call and the owl came winging over the water to find a perch in the top of a lightning scarred hemlock within fifty yards of the boat. It had barely settled when a second owl called from the swamp a quarter mile away. A half dozen calls were exchanged when we saw the owl of the swamp wing purposefully toward the hemlock. It extended its talons and dived at the perched bird. The other, evidently a trespasser, swept down from the tree and disappeared into the timber with the other in close pursuit. My friend was delighted with the experience.

Sam and I have been searching the territory of a pair of these efficient predators. We have sighted the adults and a fledgling but did not find the nest. We suspect that it is safely hidden in one of the thick crowned hemlocks that fill the valley. The roost tree is a big white oak that is partially screened by hemlocks. Here we have gathered castings for study.

It requires considerable pressure to break the large leg bones of such animals as skunk, squirrel and cottontail. Yet the horned owl seems to accomplish this feat without difficulty. The sharp splintered ends are padded

with felted fur in the castings. In the hundreds of castings I have examined I have never found a skull of even the smallest mouse intact. Most of the prey, brought to the nest to feed the young, is headless. Evidently this portion is considered a delicacy and devoured immediately.

In the present group of pellets under study there were the identifiable remains of grouse, meadow voles, shrews, deer mice, cottontails, muskrat, skunk, red, gray and flying squirrels and, strangest of all, a small number of porcupine quills. The owl evidently swallows the feet of a cottontail intact. In the castings the bones and claws are held by the undigested ligaments. Occasionally the structure of the foot can be reconstructed easily.

Grouse are particularly vulnerable during the winter when they leave the ground to bud among the bare branches. Sometimes grouse are killed on or near the drumming stands. At first it was thought that the owl was attracted by the sound of the drumming, but it has been scientifically proven that it is well below the range audible to *Bubo*. On the other hand, a grouse walking over frosted leaves makes a sound that is almost comparable to that of a walking man.

The diet of the owl is a barometer to the abundance of any bird or animal within its food range, including species known to ecologists as buffer species. It takes what is easiest to catch. At times it incurs human wrath by taking species that man considers his own. It is forgotten that the role of the predator, culling the weak, diseased and crippled, is beneficial.

Small rodents constitute the bulk of its food. Skunks and cottontails are taken according to their abundance. In one instance an owl moved into a certain residential section where starlings had established their winter roost and created so much havoc among the flocks that they left the area.

In certain areas, fish culturists are obliged to wage constant war on the owl. Last year two turkeys were killed from a flock that sportsmen had been feeding.

The economic impact of the species depends entirely on its surroundings and the species of food available. Where it becomes a nuisance, control measures are justified.

I remember as a child, the concentration with which I studied a woodcut in a book of mythology. It depicted Minerva, Roman goddess of wisdom. My interest was not centered on the stately lady that wore a helmet and carried a sword and shield, but on the owl that perched on her shoulder. Owls to ancient people were birds of superstition, prophets of disaster and in general birds of evil omen. That old woodcut kindled a spark that has led to a fascinating study that has never waned.

The variety of its calls, ranging from its base hootings to the various whinings, barkings, screamings and other weird sounds, is a part of the spirit of the wild that is fast disappearing. A glimpse of the fierce untamed predator is rare enough to be a treat to even a hardened woodsman. Its skill as a hunter and the power of its silent flight well earns it the title . . . *Bubo*, The Magnificent.

# Roanoke River — Beauty, and Disappointment

By BOB BECK, *Dry Fork*

OUR trip down the Roanoke (often called Staunton) River from Altavista to Brookneal last March by canoe served a two fold purpose. We were interested in seeing for ourselves that part of the river which the Commission of Outdoor Recreation has recommended to the General Assembly be preserved as a scenic river, and furthering our knowledge in the art of canoeing and canoe camping.

Carroll Hatcher and I put in at the low bridge on Route 668 within the corporate limits of Altavista at 6:20 Friday afternoon March 19. The water was barely deep enough to float the 15 foot canoe; however, we had trimmed our load considerably since our last trip in October down New River. This time we were taking along dehydrated foods instead of solids in order to cut down on the weight and bulk of our pack. The sleeping bags and air mattresses were our biggest bulk, but the air mattresses will soon be replaced with sleeping pads. The pads, recommended widely by canoeists and mountain climbers, are made of a material similar to foam rubber, yet will not absorb moisture.

Our first thoughts of the river were, "How could anyone possibly consider this river as a possible scenic stream?" The water was polluted beyond description. Besides the broken glass and the litter along the banks near the bridge, the water was almost blood red, which apparently came from the dye solution being dumped into the river from a local industry upstream.

In spite of our disappointment in the condition of the river, we decided to continue as planned and asked Sara (Carroll's wife) if she'd return and pick us up at Brookneal at 3 p.m. Sunday afternoon.

We covered only about a mile the first hour and most of that time was spent working ourselves off one sandbar and onto another. Travel became almost impossible, and I envisioned ourselves wading the icy water many times during the 29 miles that lay ahead. Darkness overtook us by 7:30 so we made camp at the first suitable place which was just across the river from the sewage disposal pond.

Canoe camping is somewhat different from the automotive type camping that most of us have become used to today. Instead of taking everything we need, the canoe camper must weed out everything he can do without. Our camp was fully equipped with a 7' x 9' tarp, used as a lean-to type tent, sleeping bags and air mattress for each of us, one change of clothing (in case of an upset), folding saw, the necessary cooking utensils and one quart of fresh water. We had intended to boil water from the river to use in cooking, but the water was so polluted we didn't dare use it even after it was boiled.

Firewood, mostly dead locust and sycamore, was plentiful. Both make excellent coals for cooking. We broiled two small steaks and had hot chocolate, bread,



Litter covering the banks near Altavista was most discouraging.

cake and chocolate pudding for our evening meal, but left off the instant mashed potatoes for lack of fresh water. This was to be our only meal of solid food for the trip.

During the night, the air along the river became very crisp and cold; however, I slept warm once I zipped the sleeping bag up over my head. Carroll, on the other hand, said he liked to have froze all night. He was using a square type sleeping bag which is harder to heat than the mummy style.

Saturday morning we placed a few pieces of dry kindling on the still glowing embers and soon had a roaring campfire. We had a quick breakfast of oatmeal, hot chocolate and a pop-tart and were back on the river again by 6:25 a.m.

From the campsite the river appeared to be higher than it was the evening before, but the rising fog deceived us. It was touch and go with the sand bars until we picked up the Otter River about a mile from camp. It was a very welcome sight.

To add to our growing displeasure of the river was an ugly community dump along the left-hand bank of the river. The smoldering rubbish stuck to our nostrils. How could a modern town of civilized people allow such a health hazard to continue to operate? Can it be that we are so lazy physically and mentally that we tend to neglect the facts that such things are poisoning the lifeblood of this great country called America?

At the first light we noticed that the water was no longer red; instead it was a dark blue. In fact, it was too blue. This could only mean that the manufacturers up river had changed colors of their dye during the night.

According to the Department of the Interior Geological Survey map, there were many small streams emptying into the river along this section which meant we would have an ample supply of less polluted water for our personal use. However, we still had to boil it and use drops of iodine to purify it.

At 6:40 a.m. we arrived at the Route 640 bridge. By





Above: Clean, beautiful sandbars between Long Island bridge and Brookneal show tracks of muskrat and otter. Left: Beautiful scene near Long Island, where we should have put in.



this time the river began to look somewhat better, but it still had a lot to be desired to become a scenic river. We continued to search out the deeper channels, which were often less than a foot deep. Twenty minutes after passing the bridge we saw our first rocks of any size in the river bed. They didn't, however, offer any relief to the slow moving, almost still water, but helped to build our ego. At this point the river was from 100' to 150 feet wide with pasture land on either side. The cattle that were enjoying the new sprigs of grass sometimes wandered to the river's edge to watch us as we passed by.

From 8:45 to 9:45 we hit extremely low water over gravel beds that caused us to drag bottom, but the scenery was beginning to agree with our taste. Along the right-hand side were high cliffs covered with hemlocks and various kinds of evergreens. Their presence gave us a comfortable feeling, and we hoped to find such a place to camp later on in the afternoon.

By 11:30 we had traveled about 15 miles from Alta-vista and found our best white water thus far of the trip. An island split the current into two separate streams. Both sides were rocky, each having several rock shelves that caused 12" white caps to leap into the air. We took the left-hand side, which proved to be the shortest of the two. At the end of the island was a large sandbar which offered an excellent place to prepare lunch and to restore order in the canoe.

While Carroll prepared lunch of paste-like cheese which spreads easily on dried brown bread, I removed all the gear from the canoe. The cheese is a new product put out by the Kraft Company and is very nourishing. We had collected several cups full of water coming through the last rapids, but mostly we wanted to check on our bedding to make sure that it wasn't getting wet.

Before leaving, we had packed our bedding individually in two plastic garbage bags and tied the ends tight. Then we placed it, along with our other camping equipment in an old Army duffel bag and put the whole works inside another plastic bag, one like is used for

gathering leaves. All this worked fine and we slept dry, but after the two-day trip the plastic bags began to come apart and were not strong enough for the job. We hope to find more suitable bags before another trip.

We topped our lunch off with a few slices of dried apricots and were back in the water again about ten minutes after twelve. The miles slipped by hurriedly during the next hour, and we couldn't really believe our position when we passed the mouth of Seneca Creek. It's one of the largest tributaries of the Roanoke through this area. Surprisingly we had slipped by Brown Mountain and Catamount Creek without realizing it and were well into the right-hand gut around Goat Island before catching up to ourselves on the map. The water in the gut was almost still, yet plenty deep enough to make good time with the paddles.

We thought we had gotten in the longer gut that flows around the right-hand side of Long Island which is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles long, but fortunately the one we had taken around Goat Island was only  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile long. In the summertime these guts would be like navigating through a jungle of dense brush and overhanging limbs. However, they are sure to add excitement and pleasure to the fishing waters of the Roanoke.

After getting back into the main stream at Long Branch, it was only a matter of minutes before we reached the bridge at Long Island, the place where we should have started. After we arrived at Long Island, we began to visualize the beauty of the Roanoke and hoped it could be saved for a scenic river. It is perhaps less accessible by roads than any other river in the state. Its banks are natural and undeveloped.

The last sign of the human pollution was a sewer pipe that dumped waste directly into the river some 50 yards above the bridge. While on the right-hand bank, a picturesque landmark known as the Long Island Ranch stands uncluttered and symbolizes a past generation.

At approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile below the Long Island bridge we left the scenery of farmland and drifted back into a jungle of small islands. The river separated into many small streams, much like the veins of the human body. At this point it was hard to tell which one was the main stream. So we eased the canoe into the extreme north lane and took what appeared to be the fastest running water. Almost immediately we began to experience white caps that shot us swiftly through the narrow channel; yet I'm sure we missed the best stream which appears on the map to be nearer the middle. After about 15 minutes of good water, we began to have to fight the current as the channel narrowed to 20 feet and often had to make quick, short turns to avoid the rocks.

This outer channel ran through a wild, yet beautiful area that is seldom traveled by man. A red-tailed hawk eyed us suspiciously while we worked our way off a rock, and a gray squirrel dashed for cover when we surprised him in a bend of the channel. It took an hour and a half to travel the length of the channel which appeared to be about a mile long. If we have the op-

portunity to travel the area again, we will try yet another channel.

At 3:30 p.m. we made camp, which was rather early, but we both were tired from spending eight hours in the canoe paddling through unfamiliar water. So far the water depths had run from near zero to 18 inches with some few holes six feet deep or more.

For the evening meal, we had instant rice, boneless chicken, fruit cocktail, chocolate cake and a choice of hot chocolate or tea. Each meal had been individually packed ahead of time, and this was the only one we had misfigured. The two packs of instant rice and a can of chicken apiece had been too much. Half the amount would have been sufficient.



Our Saturday night camp. Canoe campers travel light.

We both turned in at the first sign of dusk and welcomed the comfort of our sleeping bags. Although the Norfolk and Western Railway runs along the north bank of the river, it did not disturb our sleep like it had the night before at Altavista. Our camp was located about a mile upstream from where Straightstone Creek links up with the main stream.

By morning we were both well rested and anxious to see what lay ahead. After breakfast we fished for a short while, but gave up when we didn't get a strike and again headed downstream.

Almost immediately after leaving camp we hit good rapids and white water. One memorable area at this point was a long sandbar that extended downstream from an abandoned bridge pier. The sand was as clean and pure as any ocean beach, yet covered with wildlife tracks. The area no doubt was a haven for the playful otter which needs a wild environment like this to survive. Along with the host of otter tracks were those of a muskrat and wild turkey freshly imprinted in the sand.

We took the left-hand side around the pier and had a good ride for a short distance over rocks that pitched us from side to side. Soon after leaving the bridge pier the river widened and slowed to an almost standstill, requiring the use of paddles for the next mile.

Near the community of Melrose on Route 635 is one of the most beautiful areas of the river. Boulders the size of a bedroom dot the riverbed in water about four feet deep which appears to be one of the best fishing areas along the river.

Just below this area the water again was almost too shallow to float, yet by being careful, one can work his way between the shallow places without hanging up. We got into the water several times to lift the canoe over rocks, but the water was extremely cold and we avoided getting wet whenever possible. The canoe with little or no keel has a definite advantage in such shallow water. We almost leveled the  $\frac{3}{4}$  keel on our canoe before reaching Brookneal.

After about a mile of islands, the river made a sweeping turn to the right and picked up both speed and volume near the lower mouth of Buffalo Creek. We stopped and had lunch on the inlet of Buffalo Creek and fished about an hour without getting one decent bite.

From the time we ate lunch until reaching Brookneal at 1:45 p.m., we were almost continuously traveling through exciting rapids and fast water. Had the water been six inches deeper, the trip from Long Island to Brookneal would have been one more hair-raising experience.

We were disappointed with the pollution and litter along the river to the extent it seems almost useless to mention. However, we have since learned that Burling-



Carroll relaxes and enjoys smoke after passing through Rocky Shoals.

ton Industries has made a step forward in an effort to end pollution of the Roanoke River caused by their Klopman Mill at Altavista. The company announced last April that it would spend \$800,000 on a treatment plant and added that "we believe the condition you observed will be corrected when the treatment plant is completed."

So much for the colored water; now what will be done about the broken glass, the town dump and the tons of litter strewn along the banks? Can the Roanoke ever return to its natural state? We hope so, because it is truly worthy to be called a scenic river.



## CONSERVATIONGRAM

Commission Activities and Late Wildlife News ... At A Glance

**NEW GAME EMPLOYEES HIRED.** The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries has hired four new employees to fill positions within its Game Division. Gary Spiers has been hired as District Game Biologist for far southwestern counties replacing Charles Peery who was promoted to Supervising Game Biologist. Jared P. Sims has been hired for the newly created position of Game Commission Forester. Elmer P. Snyder will fill the new position of Surveyor although he has been doing this type of work for the Commission on an hourly basis for the past 7 years. Both Sims and Snyder will work out of the Game Commission's Staunton office under the direction of supervising game biologist J. W. Engle.

Spiers, a native of Roanoke, had some formal training in Electrical Engineering before receiving his B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife from VPI in 1969. He is completing his M.S. thesis on the dispersal of pheasants following release, the data for which he obtained from transmitters strapped to the birds. He lives in Chilhowie and will work out of the U.S. Forest Service office in Marion.

Sims received his B.S. degree in Forestry and Wildlife in June of 1971. He has worked for the U.S. Corps of Engineers, a private timber company, and the U.S. Forest Service before joining the Commission. Snyder was a self-employed surveyor before accepting the position with the Game Commission and earlier was employed by the West Virginia State Road Commission.

John H. Pound has been employed as Game Refuge Supervisor for the Game Commission's Highland Wildlife Management Area. Pound, his wife Nancy, and their brand new daughter, Sharrie, live in Monterey. John has worked for the U.S. Forest Service and had two years of Forest Technology training at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College before coming to work for the Commission. He will also temporarily handle work on the Goshen-Little North Mountain Area in Augusta and Rockbridge counties until a supervisor is obtained for that area.

**WESTERN DEER KILL INCREASE SURPRISES EXPERTS.** In spite of the fact that Virginia Game Commission biologists expected nothing more from the western deer season than a repeat of last year's good success, the kill figures show 14,006 animals bagged during the two week season as opposed to a total count of 13,226 from the same area last year.

Nearly all of the unexpected increase came from the Shenandoah Valley area. A total of 1,706 deer bagged in Rockingham County set a new county record. The deer kill in Shenandoah County made it above the thousand mark for the first time in 10 years. More bucks than does figured into the increase in these counties and each had a significant jump in the number of antlered bucks in the kill. The number of antlered bucks jumped nearly 40% in Frederick County.

The harvest from the central mountain section proved to be nearly identical to that of last year with a net increase of only 14 animals. In the counties around Roanoke, the kill increased by 10 deer while in the far Southwest the increase amounted to 70 animals. Opening of the Commission's Clinch Mountain Management Area in Russell, Smyth, and Tazewell counties was thought to account for much of this since these counties were among those with increases.

Does made up between 17 and 28 percent of the harvest in those counties which had either sex shooting on the last day. A doe kill of 30 percent or greater is considered necessary to stop the increase of most deer herds.

**GERALD SIMMONS NAMED NATION'S TOP BOAT SAFETY MAN.** Assistant Game Warden Supervisor Gerald Simmons of Clarksville was presented with the Olin Marine Safety Award for his outstanding boating safety work during ceremonies at the Essex House in New York City January 21. The award, an engraved barometer-ship's clock, is presented annually by the Energy Systems Division of Olin Corporation to the person who has contributed the most to boating safety in the nation. Candidates for the award are nominated by members of the National Association of Boating Law Administrators and local Power Squadrons. The selection is made by a panel of judges composed of editors of leading boating publications.

During his 15 years with the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Simmons has conducted 2981 boat safety inspections of which 59 were cited for violations of the safe boating laws. During 1971 he spent 540 hours in boating safety patrols and an additional 152 hours in public relations work to promote safe boating. He participated in 25 search and rescue missions without a single loss of life.



# WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



By CHARLES E. NIMMO, JR.  
*Williamsburg*

A number of stamps issued by the United States have focused attention on the conservation of our wildlife and natural resources and the preservation and improvement of our environment.

Some of America's most exquisitely designed stamps have promoted wildlife conservation. During the period from 1956 to 1971, ten stamps featured various wild birds and animals. The wild turkey, pronghorn antelope, and king salmon appeared on separate 1956 issues. These three species have significantly increased their populations through effective conservation measures carried out jointly by federal and state authorities. Unfortunately, the whooping crane, so beautifully portrayed on a 1957 stamp, is still in grave danger and continues to fight for survival.

Two wood ducks fly in full color on the Waterfowl Conservation issue of 1968 which recognized the accomplishments of Ducks Unlimited, an organization that has done much to preserve the habitat of our waterfowl.

The mighty buffalo stands in awesome splendor on still another conservation stamp issued in 1970.

The most recent additions to the conservation series appeared in June 1971. Four jumbo-sized stamps were released which pictured a polar bear, a California condor, a trout, and an alligator.

Another stamp of interest to conservationists was the Migratory Bird Treaty Commemorative of 1966. This issue marked the 50th anniversary of a treaty signed by Canada and the United States to protect migratory birds. An outline map of both countries is shown with two birds in flight—one flying north and the other south.

The need to conserve our natural resources has been





## BY MAIL

dramatized by four special stamps. The first, which appeared in 1958 on the 100th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's birth, was concerned with forest conservation. The principal aspects of forest preservation are symbolically presented—new growth of young trees, the harvesting of mature timber, protected watersheds, and the provision of shelter for animals and birds. It should also be noted that Roosevelt, an outstanding conservationist, has been honored on several United States stamps.

Soil conservation received attention in 1959. This stamp design points out the importance of contour plowing and symbolizes the dependence of urban areas on the farmer.

In 1960, water conservation was the theme of another stamp. The reliance of the city and farm dweller on watersheds is graphically presented.

Range conservation was the subject of the final stamp in this series. It emphasized the importance of scientific grassland and range management.

The Fifth World Forestry Congress issue in 1960 should also be mentioned in connection with natural resource conservation. The design depicted the theme of the Congress—"Multiple Use of Forest Lands"—by showing water, wildlife, timber harvesting, grazing, and recreation as symbolized by a hiker.

We cannot leave the subject of forest preservation without recalling the successful crusade of John Muir to save California's giant redwoods. A striking commemorative was released in his honor during 1964.

The earliest stamp urging Americans to beautify their land was the Arbor Day issue of 1932. It honored J. Sterling Morton who was instrumental in getting

Nebraska officials to set aside a special day for tree planting in 1872. The stamp pictures a young girl and boy planting a tree.

In 1966, the message, "Plant for a More Beautiful America," was carried on a colorful stamp showing pink and white cherry blossoms in the foreground and the Jefferson Memorial in the background. This issue highlighted President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign encouraging their fellow citizens to add natural beauty to the landscape.

Four more stamps were released simultaneously in 1969 carrying forth the beautification theme. The need to plant for more beautiful cities, parks, highways, and streets was emphasized.

The importance of human ecology—man's relationship to his environment—has also been brought to the public's attention through the medium of postage stamps. A set of four ecological issues in October 1970 stressed the urgency of protecting and saving our air, water, soil, and cities.

In regard to our cities, the necessity for careful urban planning was earlier publicized by another commemorative issue in 1967. This stamp, which shows a bird's-eye view of a well planned city, was released while an international group of experts were meeting in Washington to consider all aspects of city life over the next 50 years.

Several other United States stamps have an indirect relationship to conservation and are worthy of mention.

For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt, a President deeply committed to conservation, appears on several of our stamps. During his administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps was organized and many young men participated in various conservation projects under its auspices.

A famous American Folk Hero, Johnny Appleseed, can be seen on a stamp issued in 1966. Although not remembered as a conservationist, Johnny—in real life, John Chapman—roamed over 100,000 square miles planting apple trees. His achievement and dedication should spur on individuals today who are interested in improving the world around them.

In conclusion, attention should be directed to two of our great natural resources which are in grave danger primarily because of man's blatant disregard for nature. They are the American eagle and the Florida Everglades. Neither has been the subject of a special conservation issue but both have received philatelic recognition. The bald eagle, of course, has appeared on many stamps but none more beautiful than the 1970 issue marking the 100th anniversary of The American Museum of Natural History. The Everglades National Park issue of 1947 features an outline map of Florida showing the park area. A great white heron stands majestically in the foreground.

One can only hope that such beautiful stamps will help to stir the conscience of our citizens. May they in turn demand from government at all levels the necessary action and funds to preserve our priceless heritage of wildlife and natural resources.

# *An Honest Man Doesn't Have A Chance*

By CARSTEN AHRENS  
*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

**I**T just went to show me what an innocent remark, entirely truthful and articulately expressed, can trigger.

One night last summer I was returning to Quercus Alba Wayside, a campground where I had been vacationing. I'd had a most unusual day of fishing out on the lake for white bass.

The fish were at times everywhere, churning the surface all around me. I had long run out of bait, but those fish didn't demand food or any kind of fancy lures. They struck on pieces of the tail of my shirt. I was pulling in two at a time. Then it happened. I had set the hooks in two smallish whities and I was bringing them in, when two jumbo-sized fellows attempted to swallow them and as a result I landed four fish at one time with only two hooks! I concluded that was it! The sun was going down behind Mouse Island, and I decided to turn the outboard toward camp and call it a day. The boat-bottom was littered with flipping fish, so after picking out four for breakfast, I returned the rest to the lake. The returnees included the quartet that made such a fitting climax to this fishing extravaganza.

As I tied my boat to the landing, I could see my host had drift wood blazing in the fire ring near his lodge-office. He was playing his guitar for the benefit of his constantly-knitting wife and two vacationers who had been lured from their camp sites by the fire, the music, or just for the need of human society.

My host quieted his instrument and called, "Hi, Zeke, where'd you land the white bass?"

"In that nice, uninterrupted area bounded by the State Park, Mouse Island, South Bass, and Kelly . . ."

I was stopped in mid-course by the knitter: "Now don't tell us about the ones that got away, nor offer us any white bass . . . they're as full of fine bones as a pin cushion is of pins."

"Pay her no heed," said my host. "Tell us of your day on the lake."

And so I did and a few moments of complete silence followed. Then one said, "Are these the four you caught together on two hooks?"

"Oh, no," I answered. "These are for breakfast; those were returned to the lake with the dozens I threw back."

Said my host, "I, for one, accept your narrative. You know," he added, "I'd be tempted to think about you and your story exactly what the rest of these good

campers are thinking if I hadn't had a story I once told thrown back into my face." He put aside his guitar.

## **. . . the host's story . . .**

"Before I took on this campground, I lived in a run-down mining town. A couple miles out of the place was a body of water locally known as Legman's Pond. It had long been 'dead'; killed by the dregs from two abandoned mines. But the stories of its fish-producing days lived on in my old father's memory. So it wasn't odd my visiting nephew should insist on 'going fishing.' And to any explanation I offered, Jimmie countered with 'but grosspapa said!'"

"So fishing we went in the 'dead' lake which called for reconditioning an ancient, dried-out boat and fighting our way with it, somehow, through dense alder and willow thickets in order to reach the water. Evidently everyone except grosspapa and Jimmie were wrong. The pond had healed itself! We returned with a fine mess of eels, brook trout, catfish, and an elated Jimmie."

"But did anybody buy my story about town? No one. But when I want a good, quiet day of lively fishing, do I go to the lake? No, I return to Legman's Pond!"

My host's story was followed by silence; even the campfire ceased to crackle. Then the man from the camper spoke.

## **. . . the camper's chronicle . . .**

"Yon started to say 'Kelly's Island' and it brought back memories of past winters . . . long past. Back then, we'd angle through the ice off the island. That final winter in a -18 degree blizzard we met our Waterloo. We laboriously gouged a 6-inch hole through 12-inch ice. Our bait was instantly swallowed by a sturgeon. We estimated it was about 15 feet long and 5 feet around . . . to come through that 6-inch hole."

"We were excited. He kept his cool. We got the gaft into his protrusible snout and he pulled that gaft gently but surely from our grasp . . . like taking candy from a baby!"

"Two hours, awful frost bite, and a big hole later, we cut the line. He still had our hook. He didn't even swim away. We were so completely frustrated we haven't been through-the-ice fishing since."

The quiet became profound; even the crickets stopped fiddling. Then the man from the trailer spoke up.



. . . the trailerite's tale . . .

"Your mention of South Bass Island reminds me of my wild oats days. We were fishing on its north side, just off Gibraltar Island. Like you said it was with you, it was with us: white bass broke the surface all about us. I ran out of bait. The girl I had with me . . . we'll call her Lotus . . . offered the moonstone at her throat: 'Here, they're supposed to strike on anything.'

"I lost the pendant, snagged somehow. Lotus cried a little; Lenny had given it to seal their engagement. And Lenny didn't like it; the romance ended. Years have passed. Lenny is long gone. Lotus, after a while, became a librarian; last I heard she was in a retirement home.



"You know what has happened to that moonstone pendant?"

"Last summer my grandson and I fished off Gibraltar. We didn't see a white bass, but my line snagged. When I worked it loose, up came the moonstone pendant. I have it here in my pocket. . . ."

There was absolute silence except for the sibilant whisperings of the steel knitting needles as the sweater slowly lengthened, then the wife said:

. . . the knitter's yarn . . .

"You boys aren't the only ones who have had unusual fishing experiences. I'm going to begin mine, however, more appropriately:

"Once upon a time I hung a 4-pound catfish, the prize of my morning's catch, on the hook attached to the tree by the fish cleaning table and proceeded to skin it. After removing the entrails, I was about to take the fish down in order to remove the head and tail, when it gave a mighty flip that flopped it back into the water. It instantly disappeared.

"Later in the day, on a juicy night crawler, I again caught that greatly altered catfish. It must have been most hungry, but what it planned to do with that meal, I can't imagine!"

## Twelve Laws Of A Fisherman

By CHARLES A. PAGE  
*Gunnison, Colorado*

I. A FISHERMAN IS TRUSTWORTHY. He will tell the truth and reveal a secret place when asked where he caught that nice mess of trout.

II. A FISHERMAN IS LOYAL. He is loyal to the purism of fly fishing or bait fishing, whatever the case may be, but not so loyal that he won't switch when the occasion demands it.

III. A FISHERMAN IS HELPFUL. He will dutifully put fresh worms on his wife's hook to keep her occupied while he gets in some good fishing.

IV. A FISHERMAN IS FRIENDLY. While fishing from a boat, he waves cordially at water skiers who shout and holler as they roar past him stirring up the lake within a few feet of his line.

V. A FISHERMAN IS COURTEOUS. He politely excuses himself when he stumbles and plods by another fisherman on the stream, splashing water, making loud conversation and in general scaring the fish away.

VI. A FISHERMAN IS KIND. Although he has a special fishing spot monopolized, he humbly allows other fishermen to crowd in on him and cast their lines haphazardly in the same water.

VII. A FISHERMAN IS OBEDIENT. He obeys all state and federal laws, does not discard small fish in the bushes hoping to catch larger ones later on, and does not conceal extra fish in his hub caps.

VIII. A FISHERMAN IS CHEERFUL. After losing his favorite fly or lure, or breaking the tip of his rod in the underbrush, or discovering he left his license at home—he smiles.

IX. A FISHERMAN IS THRIFTY. He saves the farmer's cows by closing all gates behind him, does not damage fences, and practices personal thrift by saving half a sandwich to make cheese balls for bait.

X. A FISHERMAN IS BRAVE. He is courageous and careful as he attempts to drive back to the city through the suicidal traffic after a great weekend fishing.

XI. A FISHERMAN IS CLEAN. He cleans his fish without scattering the remains along the bank, does not throw beer cans or pop bottles into the river or lake, and does not tramp mud into his wife's kitchen.

XII. A FISHERMAN IS REVERENT. He gives thanks for the privilege of just being able to fish, and adds a few extra words for his luck . . . whatever that might have been.



# BREAD LINE OF POSSUMS

By

KATHERINE W. MOSELEY

*Rixeyville*

Graham Moseley photos

**I**T would seem more scholarly to write that we feed opossums in order to study their behavior patterns than to admit that watching them eat is fun. The first feeding of the first opossum was happenstance. It was a rainy winter night and we threw some stale bread out the kitchen door for whatever needed it. The Hazel River is at the foot of our hill and we have many furry, nocturnal visitors.

My husband turned on the outside light by the kitchen and a large opossum looked up at him while munching a mouthful of bread. The droll animal from out of the antediluvian past seemed in complete harmony with the wintry night. Its unfrightened complacency teased our imagination. The next night there was more bread and some bits of meat. The same opossum came again to eat, unblinking, under the light as we watched from the window. From then on we placed the food on a board, turned on the outside light, and were rewarded by a bread line of opossums. Indeed, we did learn a lot.

They are not the dullards that many think. These were intelligent enough to know after three nights that when the outside light by the kitchen was on, food was available. They had sense enough to realize that we, people, replenished the food supply. At first they scurried wildly out of the yard when we opened the door to refill the board, but as time went on they retreated only to the fence or under the picnic table to return when we went inside the house. At least three different ones stood still if my husband stepped outdoors and spoke softly. Hunchback, so called because of a ridge on its back, even took food from a spoon my husband held. This may be contrary to the average opossum's behavior, but it happened.

Before our closer contact with the species most of the opossums we had seen were either furry, bloody splotches on the highway or furtive shadows that ducked into heavy brush if approached. We assumed that John Smith's description of the first one he saw

must be right: "It hath a head like a swine and a tale like a rat." Very true. However, the heads differ: some of the heads and snouts are broad and strong; others are slender and delicately chiseled. Their faces are white with wide staring eyes. The foot-long hairless tails *are* rat-like but are valuable assets. Each tail is as facile as a monkey's, enabling the prehensile tip to curl around any support and hang by it, thus giving the opossum the equivalent of five hands. Between the head and the leathery tail (which seems out of character) is a rounded body covered with fur that may be coarse and wiry or silky and almost curly. The colors are either black or silvery white with every gradation between. This fur may be mottled or striped. In a few instances we have been able to see inherited patterns from the parents. The adults vary in size but most are about the same as a full-grown cat. Their legs are short with pink toes which are long, slender and widely spread, resembling hands, each having five digits and a big toe. When the animal is eating, it uses the forepaws to scoop up hard-to-manage morsels and stuff them into the mouth. After eating, every opossum sits on its hind feet and washes its face with its forepaws.

The opossums are not of a social order and, except for the mating season, each seems a solitary creature; however, they are permissive about each other's presence. We have had four eating amicably at the board with a minimum of pushing and snarling. With food scarce in the winter the buffet brought in stray cats, dogs, skunks, and raccoons. The skunk took care of one dog. The opossums depart when the raccoon appears; the cats are wary of the opossums.

One night a skunk and an opossum arrived at the board from opposite ends. The opossum tried to push away the skunk. The skunk's tail went up as it grabbed a bite of food. The opossum nosed it away and continued to eat. At which time the skunk circled the board, turned its back, stamped its feet and let go with its ammunition. The opossum closed its eyes and refused to



budge as it kept on eating until the board was empty. It was the opossum's victory, although a smelly one.

There was a bossy little black female opossum who would chase anything at the board. As spring approached, it was evident that her swollen pouch was bulging with young. We anxiously waited for her to appear with babies clinging to her fur and tail. When she came again soon, there was a young one riding serenely on her back, bright eyed and curious but her pouch was still full as we could see tiny tails and minute feet dangling under her belly. Until then we did not know that each little young one left the safety of the pouch at its own rate of growth.

The birth of the young is a well-known but unusual story. The opossum is a marsupial or pouched animal with usually two litters a year. It belongs to the same family as the kangaroo and the koala bear. The young are born thirteen days after mating. Their birth is through the usual female birth canal, but the young are



The bossy little black female returned with a young riding serenely on her back.

premature, undeveloped, bumblebee-sized and transparent. Only the forefeet are dominant, as with them the young must pull themselves upward through the mother's fur, which she has slicked down as a path, until they crawl into the outside pouch where there are teats. Instinctively, each infant grasps a nipple with its mouth and hangs on. Unfortunately, there are usually only about twelve teats and often twenty infants, so the last ones are doomed. The lucky ones grow fast on the mother's milk and within two months will be the size of mice, but earlier than that they will be peeping out of the pouch for a look-around and soon will be riding the mother piggyback as she forages. By the age of three months they are independent and there seem to be no family ties or 'togetherness.'

One day I called to my husband in horror that there was a small rat on the lawn. He ran out and picked up

a young opossum which immediately keeled over as if dead. He stroked its soft fur and gently placed it back on the grass. It lay quietly a few moments and then got to its feet and resumed gnawing grassroots as it made its way to the edge of the knoll. The inherited instinct to "play dead" was even then in one so young. This imitation of death is most convincing, but it is now known that the opossum is not pretending but is actually so overcome by fear as to pass into the unusual but protective coma.

Opossums are supposed to be the lowliest of creatures with little claim to fame, no aristocracy, and generally a lack of appreciation. In folklore the opossum is always the fall guy, the loser. Most tales exploit the way the fur on the tail was lost by the animal being duped.

Yet genealogists cannot trace any human family as far back as the Eocene epoch, fifty-eight to thirty-six million years ago. Of all the large, fierce, well-armed animals of that period, only the opossum has survived almost unchanged. Not only has it survived but it has thrived. Throughout much of the Pleistocene ice age there were land connections between North America and Asia and later from North America to South America. It is thought the ancestors of the opossums we know today spanned three continents. The seemingly indestructible giants of that age have long been extinct while the vulnerable opossums wandered from Asia on down to South America and back again to the Gulf States.

The ordinary Virginia opossum, *Didelphis virginiana*, is familiar from the southern states of North America to Canada and from California across to the east. The Algonquin Indian called the animals "Little White Beasts." The Powhatan's name was "Aposoums." They are seen in cities as well as rural sections, so great is their art of adjustment and their skill as opportunists.

Hunchback is no longer a resident of our acres, or is the one that limped, or Broad Nose, or the sassy little black female. We do not know just why they leave, and we doubt that they have perished. Perhaps hidden somewhere in their bloodlines is the restlessness of their forebears. The opossums now with us may be offspring, or they may be journeymen that will stay for a season.

According to biologists and naturalists theirs is a talent for survival: adaptable to surroundings, eager appetites for a variety of foods or to fast if necessary, prolific in breeding. The highways and fast-driving cars have become their inescapable enemy. How ironic if they join the extinct dinosaurs, the hairy mammoths, and sabre-toothed tiger because of man's own wanderlust that keeps the highways a deathtrap for them. They have survived other dangers; maybe this.

For us the sight of the small prehistoric animals at our kitchen door is the essence of the past and the assurance of the future. These will leave but as surely as the birds fly south again, the tide ebbs and flows, the sun rises and sets, day flows into night and winter opens into spring, a bread line of opossums will wait at our kitchen door.

# Know Your WARDENS

Text and Photos by F. N. SATTERLEE  
*Information Officer*



CHARLES D. TORRENCE

Charles D. Torrence is an Area Leader Warden, responsible for activities of wardens assigned to Appomattox, Prince Edward, Buckingham and Charlotte counties in the Patrick Henry District.

Mr. Torrence joined the Game Commission on April 1, 1959, and was assigned to duty in Appomattox County. On November 1, 1966, he was promoted into his present grade. He has always loved the land, nature, and wildlife and came to the Commission with extensive experience in farming. To him the job of a warden is very gratifying. This is especially true as he watches young people develop an interest in the out-of-doors and, as they mature, gain an understanding of the natural world around them.

Mr. and Mrs. Torrence, the former Minerva Williams of Lynchburg, Virginia, live at Route 2, Appomattox, Virginia.

CLARENCE R. WALKER

On November 16, 1956, Clarence R. Walker joined the Virginia Game Commission as a warden. His initial assignment was to duty in Albemarle County. During his maturing years and while he was serving two years in the U. S. Marine Corps, he had grown to love and appreciate all aspects of outdoor life. In his job as Game Warden and since November of 1966 in the capacity of Area Leader with responsibility for Albemarle, Greene, and Nelson counties in the Thomas Jefferson District, one of his greatest satisfactions is that of being able to help other people to appreciate the outdoors and the abundance of our great natural resources.

He is married to the former Beverly Gibson, a native of Albemarle County and the couple live at Route #6, Charlottesville.



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



# ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By TONY PHOENIX

## I DREAM OF GWENDOLYN

I JUST found out something that I didn't want to find out. From a friend too. If he's telling me the truth, then thousands of us who read magazines are in for a disappointment.

In addition, if what he tells me is true, then our favorite outdoor magazines, including *Virginia Wildlife*, could learn something from the way the real pros operate.

A close hunting and fishing companion dropped the bomb on me.

Harry came by the house one evening as I was drying and cleaning my shotgun after a rainy day of duck hunting.

He considers himself an intellectual. Maybe he is.

I had just put the gun away when our conversation got around to magazine subscriptions.

I told him I'd renewed my *Virginia Wildlife* and was thinking about renewing my subscription to *Monthly Reader*.

"But you renewed your subscription to the *Reader* two months ago," he reminded me.

"I know," I said, "but I . . . well, I got this fantastic offer in the mail today from Gwendolyn and . . ."

"Who?" he asked.

"Gwendolyn, of the *Monthly Reader*. You know. She signs all the letters from the subscription department. I guess everybody gets mail from Gwendolyn.

"Yes, practically everybody does," he answered with a tone I've heard him use with very small children.

"She's the one that's always telling you you've almost won \$100,000. Right?" he asked.

"Well, yes," I answered defensively, "but I believe her."

"I suppose you know Gwendolyn is a computer," he said.

I gasped. I had allowed him from time to time to get by with snide remarks about my wife and children, my dogs, and my dove shooting on bad days, but this was taking it a little too far.

Truth is, I had begun to feel very tender toward Gwendolyn. Like most Americans, I heard from her often. Her chatty, informal, personal style of letter writing had gotten me to the point where I mentally called her "Gwen," even if I didn't say it out loud.

True, my outdoor magazines were the first ones I read each month. I saved letters from Gwendolyn 'til last for sentimental reasons.

Harry wouldn't let it alone.

"A computer," he chuckled. "You've been taken in by a blinky-eyed computer."

He started to holler to the kitchen and tell my wife why we were getting six copies of *Monthly Reader* a month when I stopped him.

"Harry, you're wrong," I said. "A computer just can't show the emotion . . . the interest in me that this girl does."

I reached for the latest letter with her signature which I happened to have close by.

"Listen to this," I insisted, a little desperate now.

I began to read: "No one else in Virginia or anywhere else, for that matter, has the two numbers shown on your certificate. These numbers are not transferable. They are registered exclusively for Tony Phoenix."

"Hah!" I cried. "I guess you're going to tell me a computer said *that*. And I get friendly letters like this all the time."

"I do too," answered Harry, "and so do probably a million other Americans."

"By the way," he continued, "whatever causes you to keep subscribing to this magazine and entering those silly contests when you've been a subscriber—many times over—for years?"

"Well," I said, "to tell you the truth, the letters have been so nice from Gwendolyn that I've been afraid I'd hurt her feelings if I didn't respond."

"And you mean to tell me you've been writing this computer?" he asked with disbelief on his face.

I had to admit that's exactly what I'd been doing.

"Why don't you subscribe to multiple issues of *Sports Afield* or *Virginia Wildlife*?" he asked. "I know you like to hunt and fish better than you like to improve yourself, as suggested by the *Monthly Reader*. Why don't you order 10 copies of the outdoor magazines a month?"

"I'll tell you why," I snapped, defensive now. "I subscribe to all the hunting and fishing magazines, just like you say, but the way they ask me to subscribe is different.

"For instance, look at this *Outdoor Life* renewal slip. It's neat, efficient, does the job. But it lacks the personal warmth of Gwendolyn.

"Just let me get a piece of mail with her name on it. I know before I read it that it'll tell me I've been selected from a multitude of others to receive her attention. I can't resist her. That old gal—even if she is a computer—has a real touch!"

Harry was looking at a mounted wood duck but his mind wasn't on duck hunting.

"I wonder," he said, apparently thinking out loud, "if they could hire Gwendolyn the computer to write solicitations for the outdoor magazine industry. She could be programmed with a pen name. If they could just get their hands on a master mailing list of people like you, Lord, they'd make a mint."

# STOP GUNS!

# STOP HUNTING!

By CHARLES BURTON

If you think the gun control issue is dead, you better get your head off the stock of your Model 12 and take another look. The anti-gun army is ready to attack again—with reinforcements. Those who would take our guns have found a new ally in the misinformed individuals who rally under the banner of the anti-hunting sentiment. Bambi is back!

There now seems to be two schools of thought used by the gun control proponents. One is that if you eliminate the guns you eliminate crime; the other holds that if you stop hunting you have assured abundant wildlife for time eternal. Persons embracing these ideas find comfort in each other's company. Simply stated, one feels that if you eliminate hunting you have removed the primary reason for private ownership of firearms and then gun control can be swung with no opposition and the crime rate will automatically drop. At the same time the other holds firm to the conviction that if anti-crime, anti-gun forces win their battle, the wildlife boom will be started.

These arguments hold water as far as the stop-guns-stop-hunting or the stop-hunting-stop-guns point, but after that point the logic gets leaky. I fear that for all their optimism these prophets of prohibition may be the saddest of all with the actual result if their tragic plans should become a reality.

The public defenders against the forces of evil would probably recoil (no pun intended) in horror to find that very few, if any, criminals would step forward and hand over their guns just because someone asked them politely.

This gun control threat from the anti-hunting crowd is couched in ignorance and sentiment, and these are two formidable foes. Facts always face a hard fight against emotion, but fight we must. To illustrate the need to prepare for battle, assume for a moment that the battle is over and the Bambi-ites have won.

First consider the fate of Bambi himself. He is not the eternal deer some people think he is. He will eventually get old and pass on to that great wildlife refuge in the sky. But before his demise many things will take place. Of course, as he gets older he will outlive his usefulness to his fellow deer, but still he will have to eat and occupy space on the range. And speaking of the range, no doubt much of it will be lost to farming, cities, highways, lakes, and timber management during his lifetime.

So here we have Bambi, getting older, his home on

the range getting smaller, and, as if that were not enough, he looks around and sees a population explosion taking place.

Still Bambi goes his merry way, not noticing his teeth wearing away with age or his once massive rack of antlers withering to a pitiful remnant of what they once were. Then one day the food seems to be gone. Oh,



L. Rue III photo

Those who hold that if we eliminate guns we will eliminate crime have found new allies among the equally misinformed who believe that if we stop hunting we will be assured more abundant wildlife for all time.

there are leaves to browse, alright, but now they are out of reach. Seems like only yesterday he had to reach down for them. Surely the trees did not grow that fast. Now Bambi must settle for a much less succulent diet, and, though he has no dietician to tell him, it is also less nourishing. The signs of old age become more pronounced. Bambi is weakening. In a short while death will claim him. How? There are a variety of ways. Perhaps he will starve when winter strips away what little forage is left. Or maybe he will freeze to death before he can starve. Or there is the chance that in his weakened condition he will fall to parasites and disease. And there



is always the possibility of the predators, the bobcat or coyote, finding an old and weak Bambi easy to catch and kill.

At any rate Bambi will be gone. He may not go easily or without pain, but he will go. And what of his offspring? What will become of them? Bambi has left them a heritage of a barren range. He has produced them at a faster rate than the environment could absorb. Now there are too many Bambi Jr.'s in too little space with too little food. They will suffer the fate of their fathers (and mothers), only at an earlier age.

You see, contrary to what some people seem to believe, deer (and other wildlife) lack many of the characteristics of human beings. There will be no parents to feed them once they are weaned. No one can tell them where to find food. A short while after they are born they will be forsaken and will have to do the best they can. And the best will not be good enough.

While Bambi was slowly eating the browse line out of reach (No, Bambi, the trees did not grow that fast) he was dooming his own offspring to a bleak future. Of course Bambi had plenty of help from man, but a large part of it was his own doing. Do not blame Bambi, though. Nobody has as yet taught animals the principles of population control. Animals know nothing of farming. They have yet to learn how to mass produce food for an expanding population. And, unlike man, deer cannot stack their dwellings one on top of the other to conserve space. No, the only answer nature has ever devised for these problems is multiple deaths.

The point is not as complex as I have made it. I offer the preceding story only to illustrate this point: If man does not take the surplus of a wildlife population, nature will. I doubt if any of the anti-hunter community will read this story to their children as they tuck them into bed. In fact, I would rather they did not, at least until they are old enough to understand. I would rather see adults begin to realize that the hunter is the best friend Bambi ever had. I would like to hear an end of all this talk about hunters being murderers. I would delight in knowing that one person in the "Society to Kill-off Hunting" had come to realize that the beef steak they eat is more closely a product of a murder than my venison. Which is worse—to kill a wild animal that faces the threats Bambi encountered or to raise an animal much as you would a pet, nurture and feed it until you deem conditions just right, and then knock it in the head with a pole-ax? For some reason the people who put me down because I hunt fail to get the connection. The reason? The gun.

Which brings us back to where we started. In light of all the facts the issue cannot be the sole act of killing animals. If that were true the industries that fill the butcher shops and meat markets would be getting as much static as the hunter. No, the issue is gun control. If hunters do not vigorously oppose gun control legislation now, the next time you hear someone say, "You keep 'im covered, I'll get his guns," it won't be some TV cowboy—it will be federal agents. And the guns they will be getting will be yours.

## Second Pheasant Harvest

(Continued from page 6)

preserves where pheasants are privately stocked under Game Commission supervision for fee hunting. Here hunting is permitted from October 1 to March 31, a six-months season each year. Bag limits are related only to the preserve operators' extent of pheasant stocking. Excellent hunting can be had on well managed preserves.

Most states and most experienced hunters recommend shooting preserves.

Luther Partin, *Wildlife in North Carolina*, says: "The shooting preserve offers a package that's hard to beat for the man who has to squeeze his hunting in between business appointments or work schedules. The shooting is there, no worry about that. From October through March, you can count on good wing shooting almost every day.

"Many people keep one or several bird dogs and only get to hunt a few days out of the year. Preserve shooting can provide the place to hunt, dogs, and birds to shoot, saving this type of hunter considerable time, work, and probably money."

"Most shooting preserves will have dogs capable of taking honors at field trials. It's almost worth the price of a hunt just to watch a really good dog hunt, point and retrieve."

And here's an added quote from the well known Virginia sports writer Bill Cochran, from an article in *Virginia Wildlife*.

"Let me say right here, I like shooting preserves. I think they supplement our natural hunting in a fine way. I think there is a growing need for them in our state."

The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, Richmond, will be glad to send you a list of licensed shooting preserves.

Our main goal, of course, is widespread pheasant establishment for general hunting. We can all help to build up pheasant populations in Virginia as has been done in the northern states, where from initial harvests barely in the hundreds pheasants are now harvested by the millions.

Pheasants are strangers and newcomers to our fields. They must be especially well treated for the first few years of their existence here.

As has been said before, pheasant establishment is basically a matter of evolving locally adapted strains through natural selection. Other states, where good pheasant hunting has become an every-year experience, have all gone through periods of initial stockings, supplemental stockings, limited harvests, and final population emergence. Whenever we can observe that brood rearing and overwinter survival follows from our stockings, we can feel sure that with care and protection there is a good chance the pheasants will be able to evolve a locally adapted strain, and build up huntable and self-sustaining populations over a few years' time.

One of the finest ways in which you as a sportsman can work for better hunting is to adopt a farm and work with the farmer in improving game habitat.



Edited by HARRY GILLAM

### State Record Brown Trout



Roanoke Times photo by Cochran

This 11 pound 9 ounce brown trout caught by Nelson Creasy of Hollins set a new state record. Creasy landed the monster on a light spinning outfit with 8 pound line while fishing in Marshall Draft, a small tributary of the Cowpasture River open to public angling below the Commission's Coursey Springs Fish Cultural Station in Bath County. The trout was one of several that had been used in experiments employing artificial light in an attempt to make them spawn earlier that were subsequently stocked in various streams in late October.

### Commission Purchases Fluvanna Hunting Tract

The Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries has exercised options to purchase 986 acres along the James and Hardware Rivers in Fluvanna County for use as a public hunting area. The parcels, known locally as Kidd Mill Farm and the Ritchie Estate, are located about 5 miles downstream from Scottsville and include some two miles of frontage on the James River and 3 miles on the Hardware River. Except for 88 acres of bottomland, all of the area is wooded, much of it recently logged. Acquisition, marking, and development were not complete in time to open the area to hunting this season.

The new management area is reported to have a good deer herd and

will offer some opportunity for hunting quail, squirrels, and turkeys. The bottomland fields may provide some dove shooting. Smallmouth fishing is reported good in this section of the James and Hardware Rivers. Development plans include a boat ramp which will provide a launching point for float fishermen and duck hunters between the existing Commission ramps at Scottsville and Columbia. One of the tracts has a potential site for a 30 acre pond.

Best access to the management area is by means of Route 646 leading south from Route 6 some 6 miles east of Scottsville. It is hoped that the area can be opened for use by fishermen some time in the spring.

### Middle River Smallmouths



Bob Lynch of Richmond caught this four-pound smallmouth bass from the Middle River in Augusta County on Labor Day. The lunker took a hellgrammite bait. He was using a light spinning rod and reel with six-lb. monofilament line.

"It was a beautiful day so Pete, my son-in-law, and I decided we would give the smallmouths a try in an untried portion of the Middle River, one of the few freshwater streams in the state that is still clean," Bob Lynch writes. "We had fished other sections of the river before and caught many pan-size smallmouths up to two pounds, but this time I told Pete I

wanted a trophy smallmouth."

"It was around noon when we put our 12-foot johnboat in the stream for what we expected to be five miles of wading and floating. As it turned out, we waded and dragged our boat about four miles and floated about one mile of the best looking smallmouth waters I had ever seen. Pete had caught two nice smallmouths about 1-1/2 lbs. each, and I had one on my stringer that weighed about 1-3/4 lbs."

"Trees overhanging the river shaded a rocky area. My hellgrammite hit the water and sank slowly around the rocks, and it happened. As the fish took the bait and began reeling off line, I set the hook fearing he might pull the bait off. But this was my lucky day. As the fish broke water about 5 times, I experienced a thrill of a lifetime. A four-pound smallmouth can pull like any other fish twice its size. After a ten-minute battle, I was able to bring him slowly into my landing net."

The mounted fish now hangs on the wall of his recreation room, and he dreams of landing a five pounder.

### Top Roanoke Buck

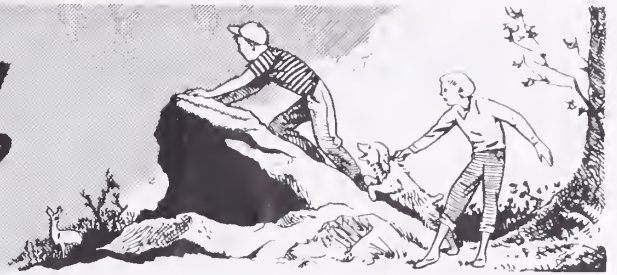


B. C. Stout of Roanoke bagged this magnificent specimen near his cabin in the McAfee's Gap section of Roanoke County. Local residents claim it is the largest they have seen taken from this area in many years. He plans to enter the head in state big game trophy competition next fall.





# YOUTH AFIELD



Edited by ANN PILCHER

Scored 100



Commission photo by Kesteloo

Standing with his mother, Mrs. Norman Abt, Cardwell Elementary sixth grader Kenneth Abt receives special award from James N. Kerrick, of the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, for perfect score on hunter safety exam.

Prior to the opening of hunting season this fall, State Game Warden J. S. Winn and Warden Patrol Leader W. R. Redford, Jr., instructed 250 fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students of Goochland County's Cardwell Elementary School in the principles of firearms safety. Kenneth Abt, sixth grader, received 100 on the hunter safety exam, and at the awards ceremony was presented a special trophy purchased by the school in recognition of his unusual achievement.

Materials for the course were donated by Southern States, the Bank of Goochland, J. T. Lacy, and the Farm Bureau. Marvin F. Pryor, chairman of the Goochland County School Board, and James N. Kerrick, Game Commission Safety Officer, spoke during the presentation ceremonies in which graduates of the course received certificates for course completion and Safe Hunter patches.

## Refuge Supervisor

A refuge supervisor has many jobs to do. He combines seed and works until dark. For the whole state of Virginia is waiting for the game bird seed which

he harvests.

He builds ponds on different management areas throughout the state. He fills them up with fish and cuts the grass around the beautiful lakes.

During hunting season the city hunters await his assistance.

Day and half the night he's on the job making sure hunters do what they're supposed to.

He plants food for the wildlife, and never quits until it's done.

Because he thinks of other people and how much hunting is fun.

People complain to him because the grass is cut or not cut;

They complain of the shortage of wildlife and how little fish there are.

People don't stop to think of how much work a refuge supervisor does.

Or how much he tries to make his management area one for which he has pride.

If you ever see a man dressed in green, combining, digging, planting, or who is always trying to help someone.

Then you'll know he's a refuge supervisor trying to make an area fit for the wildlife and the visitors who come.

—SHARON PATTERSON  
Powhatan High School, Powhatan

## Part of the Day's Work

Trash and litter collection and recycling has been a major interest of the Francis Satterlee family in Vienna, Va., for several years. Son John, who has been attending Minnesota's St. Cloud State College, coordinates the recycling phase of the St. Cloud Area Environmental Committee's activities. This year, when 16-year-old Nancy became secretary-treasurer of the ecology club of her school, she went into action locally. Recruiting neighborhood children to help with collection, she contacted families on her street about saving paper, glass, and cans for recycling. Twenty-three families agreed to participate and were asked to prepare for

the collections by flattening cans after removing paper and can ends.

Each Saturday Nancy, her younger sister Carol, and her other "little slaves" visit the 23 participating houses to pick up cans, glass and paper. They carry these items back to the Satterlee home in small wagons for sorting. Glass is divided into three groups: clear, green, and brown. Caps are removed and rings taken from the necks of the bottles. Tin, aluminum, and bi-metal cans are sorted separately. Then Dad gets into the act. The family station wagon is loaded with items ready for recycling and a trip made to Tyson's Corner Recycling Center in Fairfax County.

The center is manned on a volunteer basis by people from surrounding communities and there are four organizations involved: Reston Environmental Movement, Vienna Environmental League, Inc., Drainsville Environmental Force, and Great Falls Civic Association.

From May 8, 1971—when the Tyson's Corner Recycling Center opened—through November 3, a total of 180 tons of newspapers, 96 tons of glass, and 2,150 pounds of aluminum was collected.

Now, a recycling center has been approved for Vienna—good news for the Satterlees, for it'll save at least 5 miles during the Saturday trip to the center.

Nancy Satterlee, right, and co-workers in Vienna, Va., with part of a Saturday morning's collection of glass, bottles, and paper being readied for a trip to the recycling center.

Commission photo by Satterlee





# ON THE WATERFRONT



Edited by JIM KERRICK



This 21 footer can carry you away to a lonely cove or just a pleasant journey on the water.

## Me Buy A Boat? Yes, You Can!

If there ever was an untruth, it's that you have to have money to buy a boat. Sure, if you want to sail around in a 50-foot yacht or zip along in a luxurious cabin cruiser, it's going to cost plenty of bread.

But, if you're looking for a boat to go fishing on a mountain lake or a small outboard to frolic on a river on weekends, you don't need to be president of a corporation to buy a boat.

The cost of buying a small outboard or sailboat can be and usually is less than an automobile. And I'm not talking about the \$7,000 models.

For instance, if you're looking for a boat for fishing expeditions, major boat manufacturers are producing small boats in the 12-foot range that cost as little as \$200. A little larger boat, a 16-footer and especially made for fishing, can go for about \$1,000. A small engine, say 40 horsepower, would be just the ticket to power you around as you search out the bass and trout. An engine that size runs in the vicinity of \$730.

Finally, if you plan on going inland, a trailer is what you'll need to transport your boat. Trailers start at about \$170. So, with the aid of an adding machine, you can purchase a fishing boat for those weekend trips for less than \$2,000.

Many people like sports boats much like they do sports cars. Well, unlike

their dry land counterparts, the sports boat doesn't necessarily have to cost you in excess of \$5,000.

A flashy 17-foot sport boat can be had for around \$1,200 and a 60 horsepower engine for the same. So for about \$3,000, including equipment, you can take your friends waterskiing on your favorite waterway.

If sailboats are your bag, a sleek fully equipped rig in the 14-foot range will cost no more than \$1,500. Built to hold two people comfortably, certain models are perfect for young couples. For the family, special roomy 14-foot models may run in the neighborhood of only \$900.

Larger and more equipped craft will,



One of the most popular boats is still the trusty old canoe.

of course, cost more. Many sailboats built to sleep four will average about \$8,000.

But the majority of boats, their styles and shapes ideal for fun on the water for individuals or families and friends, are not expensive.

One look at a consumer catalog, however, will show you there is a boat for every man. There are so many models for under two thousand dollars, just right for the middle class American, that buying a boat is really within most people's economic range. Major manufacturers actually are building boats with this person in mind. He's the rule rather than the exception.

Boat shows are the non-boatman's

best place to view the year's newest models. If you've never been to one, go. It's a pleasant and entertaining event and, who knows, you may walk away with the boat you've always wanted and never thought you'd ever afford.

You can be sure of one thing. They'll be there in all shapes, sizes and prices; boats for as low as a few hundred dollars and engines of only two horsepower. Even a surfboard with sails!

When a boat show comes to town, it's a good idea to go see it. If there isn't a show close by, make a visit to your local dealer. If you've always wanted to own a boat and never took the final step, "Try it; you'll like it!"

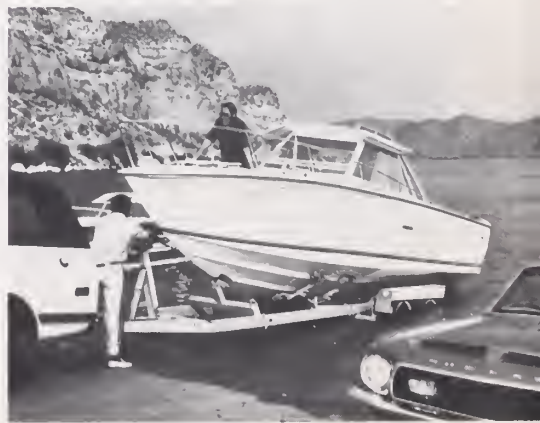
## Look Down On a Rainy Day

Excessive rain or frequent storms often cause a rapid rise in the level of a river and even in some lakes. When this happens, there is usually an increase in floating debris picked up from the water's edge.

When running a river that has risen due to rain or through release of water from an upriver dam, keep an eye on the water for partially submerged objects. It's always a good idea to scan the water ahead of your craft, but especially so after heavy rains. Submerged objects that float just beneath the surface can be very damaging to boat or motor.

Trailer boating is the economical way to move your boat over land when you want to visit different waterways.

Photos courtesy H. A. Bruno and Associates





*Bird  
of the  
Month:*

BY JOHN W. TAYLOR  
*Edgewater, Maryland*



*Hairy Woodpecker*

THE hairy and downy woodpeckers form a relationship unique among American birds. In no other instance has there evolved two distinct species, so similar in coloration, and differing primarily in size. The hairy lacks the markings on the outer tail feathers, and its bill is proportionately longer, but it is otherwise a large-scale version of the downy.

The common names for these woodpeckers are not really descriptive, for neither is more downy nor hairy than the other. They are named for the short feathers which conceal the nostrils, a protective covering found often on birds which winter in cold climates.

The size difference is the basis for other characteristics peculiar to the hairy. Its call note is higher and more emphatic, and its drumming is louder and more deliberate. Its tapping and probing activities can stir up quite a commotion in the woods (the downy could hardly raise such a fuss).

The hairy is more a bird of the heavy forest, and is less trusting of man. It seldom ventures to backyards and suburban areas as does the downy.

A hardy bird, the hairy begins mating exceptionally early. Courtship antics may be noticeable in February, and most males are drumming by the first days of March. For this a resonant dead limb is selected, and used as a sounding board for hammering out advertising and promotional messages.

Both sexes assist in excavating the nesting hole, which may be situated at a height of 30 feet or more. The tree chosen is either dead or diseased to facilitate digging. Eggs are laid by the middle of April in middle latitudes, a bit later in the north.

Taxonomists have had a good time with the hairy woodpecker, separating it into many geographical races. The typical race, to which most Virginia birds belong, is distributed throughout the eastern United States (and Canada) south to the gulf states. In the far southeastern corner of the state, at Cape Henry and in the Dismal Swamp, the southern hairy woodpecker may be found. Its breast is a dingier gray, but since Virginia marks the terminus where the subspecies overlap, interbreeding is frequent, thus blurring an already slight distinction.

# WOODPECKERS

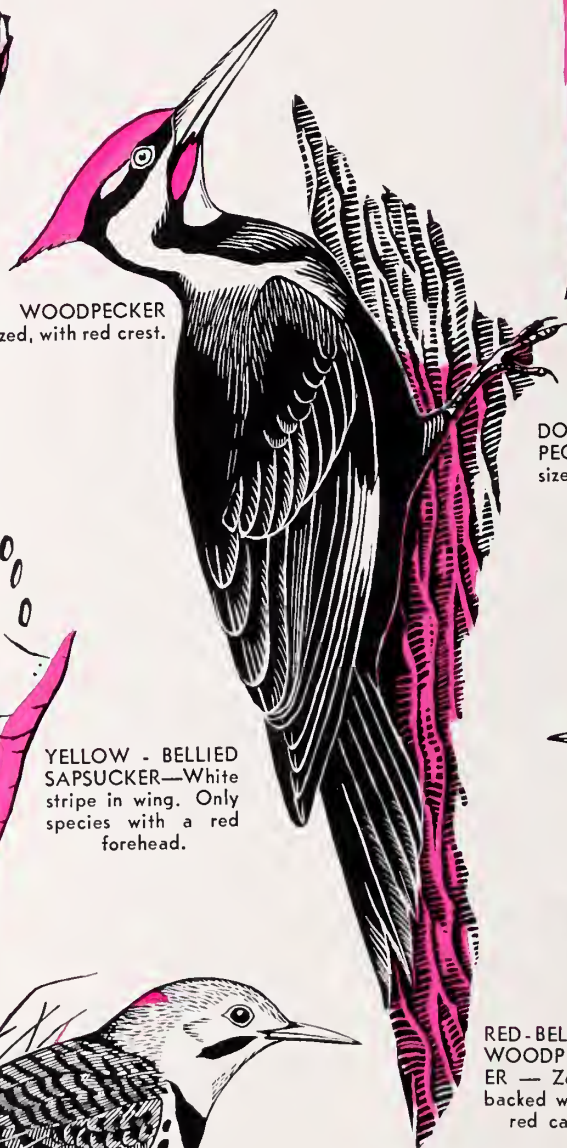


RED-HEADED WOODPECKER—The only species with the entire head red. White wing patches in flight.

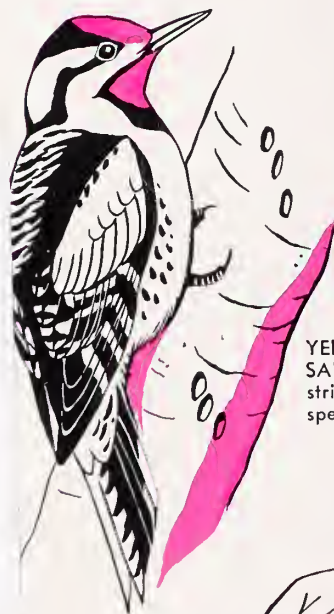


HAIRY WOODPECKER—Large-billed, with a white back. Plain outer tail feathers.

PILEATED WOODPECKER  
—Crow-sized, with red crest.



DOWNY WOODPECKER — Small size, barred outer tail feathers.



YELLOW - BELLIED SAPSUCKER—White stripe in wing. Only species with a red forehead.



FLICKER—Brown-backed, with a white rump. Yellow under wings and tail.



RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER — Zebra-backed with a red cap.

J.W. TAYLOR